

109TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. RES. 554

Urging the Government of the Gabonese Republic to hold orderly, peaceful,
and free and fair presidential elections in November 2005.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

NOVEMBER 15, 2005

Mr. PAYNE (for himself and Mr. WYNN) submitted the following resolution;
which was referred to the Committee on International Relations

RESOLUTION

Urging the Government of the Gabonese Republic to hold
orderly, peaceful, and free and fair presidential elections
in November 2005.

Whereas the Gabonese Republic is a heavily forested and oil-
rich country on the west coast of Central Africa, which
produces nearly 270,000 barrels of oil per day;

Whereas Gabon gained independence from France in 1960,
was subject to single-party rule until 1990, and has dem-
onstrated its support for the democratic process through
the formation of numerous political parties since 1990
and the strong participation of its people in prior elec-
tions;

Whereas Gabon is scheduled to hold national elections in No-
vember 2005 for the purpose of electing a President;

Whereas the Government of Gabon is a signatory to the “Paris Accords” of 1994, approved by national referendum in July 1995, which provides for a state of law guaranteeing basic individual freedoms and the organization of free and fair elections under an independent national election commission;

Whereas Gabon has enjoyed a strong relationship with the United States, as demonstrated by Secretary of State Colin Powell’s historic visit to Gabon in September 2002, the President of Gabon’s visit to the White House in May 2004, and cooperative business and trade relations between the two countries;

Whereas the Department of State’s 2005 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices states with respect to Gabon that the last presidential election in 1998, the legislative elections in 2001, and the senatorial elections in 2003 were marred with serious administrative problems and irregularities, including incomplete and inaccurate electoral lists and the use of false documents to cast multiple votes;

Whereas in July 2003, the Gabonese Constitution was amended to remove any references to presidential term limits;

Whereas the President of Gabon has been the leader of that country since 1967 and is the longest serving leader on the continent of Africa;

Whereas the judiciary of Gabon is widely viewed to be inefficient and subject to government influence;

Whereas the President of the National Electoral Commission in Gabon issued a decree that permits the military to

vote in their barracks on November 25 and the general population to vote on November 27, 2005;

Whereas this decree potentially raises the possibility that, in the absence of proper safeguards, military personnel might vote more than once and that other voting irregularities might occur since military barracks are not generally open to public observation;

Whereas the Gabonese Minister of Immigration threatened to invalidate the passports of members of opposition political parties seeking to travel outside of Gabon in response to their alleged criticism of the President of Gabon overseas, which can only be viewed as a threat to the freedoms of speech and of assembly;

Whereas, according to press reports, in some locales, electoral lists have not been posted, and in others, voter registries may have been inflated; and

Whereas it is in the interest of the United States to promote political and economic freedom in Africa and throughout the world: Now, therefore, be it

1 *Resolved*, That the House of Representatives—

2 (1) recognizes and commends the mediation ef-
3 forts of the Government of the Gabonese Republic in
4 Angola, Burundi, the Central African Republic,
5 Chad, Congo (Brazzaville), Congo (Kinshasa), and
6 Cote d'Ivoire;

7 (2) recognizes and commends those Gabonese
8 who have demonstrated their desire for free and fair
9 elections;

1 (3) believes it is critical that the November
2 2005 presidential elections be conducted in a fair
3 and transparent manner, and that the elections be
4 viewed by the people of Gabon as such so that the
5 winner of the election can claim a clear and legiti-
6 mate mandate to govern the country;

7 (4) calls on the Government of Gabon and op-
8 position parties to continue their peaceful dialogue
9 and to fairly and transparently resolve any elections-
10 related disputes between them;

11 (5) calls on the Gabonese Government—

12 (A) to hold orderly, peaceful, free, and fair
13 presidential elections in November 2005 in
14 order to ensure the long-term growth and sta-
15 bility of Gabon;

16 (B) to guarantee the full, free, and open
17 participation of opposition parties in the up-
18 coming elections; and

19 (C) to guarantee all Gabonese citizens the
20 freedom of speech and the freedom of assembly;
21 and

22 (6) calls on the Government of the United
23 States and the international community to continue
24 to encourage and support the institutionalization of
25 democratic processes and the establishment of condi-

- 1 tions for good governance in Gabon and the sub-re-
- 2 gion.

